

I support media diversity
Dear Committee Members:

I believe that the single greatest concern in your pending decision on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules, must be the guarantee of competition and openness in the coverage and presentation of news to the American people. The future of America as a democracy depends on this. I am not sure of the best way to achieve this goal, but I have listened to many hours of debate and discussion on this issue and I am convinced that the solution demands a broad public hearing - and yes - the education of the American public as to its importance. There is abundant and compelling evidence that deregulation or poor regulation leads to massive abuses and severe harm to the public good. Cases in point are the collapse of Enron, the Savings and Loan failures after deregulation, and the tremendous financial abuse of the citizens of California after energy deregulation there. The only safe assumption is that unless the public interest with respect to a free and open press is protected, it will be sacrificed in the name of efficiency and profit.

It would be as REFRESHING AS IT IS ESSENTIAL in this time of increasing public cynicism and apathy for a government agency to clearly place the public good ahead of the demands and influence of incredibly wealthy special interests and to demand complete openness and public debate on this issue. The only true security for our democracy and the only remedy for poor government is the active participation of an INFORMED citizenry.

In its goals to promote competition, diversity and localism in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate the negative affects media deregulation and consolidation have had on media diversity. While there may be indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented have become more limited.

The right to carry on informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. Our forefathers believed that democracy was best served by a diverse marketplace of ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to merge, our ability to have open, informed discussion with a

wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised.

The public interest will best be served by preserving media ownership rules in question in this proceeding.

In addition to the official hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA, I strongly urge the FCC to hold additional hearings elsewhere around the nation to solicit the widest possible participation from the public which will be the most directly affected by the outcomes of these decisions. I think it is important for the FCC to not only consider the points of view of those with a financial interest in this issue, but also those with a social or civic interest.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is incumbent on the Commission to take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

Sincerely,

Dr. Barbara L. Edgar